

A PAPER that was published in the GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE, for January 1788, breathes such a Spirit of HUMANITY and BENEVOLENCE towards the lower Class of Mankind, and at the same Time fixes their CLAIMS on Society upon so rational a Ground, that the present Editor cannot but wish to extend the Knowledge of the Principle on which it is written. If, by being reprinted and dispersed in this Form, it may contribute to excite Sentiments of JUSTICE and COMPASSION to the POOR among Persons in superior Stations, the Intention both of the AUTHOR and Distributer will be agreeably answered.

MR. URBAN,

AT a time when so many new schemes are in agitation for the better management of the poor, while objections are raised against them all, and yet all acknowledge that some alterations and improvements are necessary; I beg to be indulged with the insertion of a few observations on two points which ought to be considered previously to the establishment of any new mode, and a proper attention to which might decide the preference due to one above another. These points are, the RIGHTS OF THE POOR, and the COMFORTS OF THE POOR.

With respect to the Poor Man's RIGHTS, I presume they are *naturally* the same with the rich man's. Set the prince and the basket-maker together upon a desolate island, and it is certain the birth of the former will not be so good a plea for superiority as the skill of the latter. But in a *state of society*, the *rights* of the poor man must be estimated by the *sacrifices* he has made (or has acquiesced in) for the benefit of that society. Now these are great indeed. He has resigned to the landlord all his share of the ground which his own hands cultivate; not reserving to himself so much as will bury him. He has lent to the merchant and manufacturer the use of his limbs, as an engine to procure them wealth, at a rate much below their real value. He has relinquished, to those who are called his betters, all claim to power, rank, title, and respect, and is content to swell the pomp of state by the contrast he exhibits of meanness opposed to grandeur; without which comparative relation neither of them would exist. What then, in such an unequal distribution, is left him? Surely the security, at least, that his condition shall not become still worse (unless by his own fault); and that, like the bee which resigns her treasures to man, he may remain unmolested in his hive, and be fed with a portion of that honey which he collects for his masters. If this be denied him, will he not be apt to call for a fresh division of the common property, and say, "Give me the portion of good things which falleth unto me." Heavy as is the burden of poor-rates, I suppose the opulent do not wish for such a liquidation of the account. I conceive it, therefore, to be the *right* of the poor man, *at all events*, and notwithstanding the burdens which may seem to press upon the rich, to be secured in the continuance of the humble enjoyments belonging to his station. A *willingness to labour* is all the return that can be required of him. If, either by

Go, and they go; and Come, and they come. He is not without a sense of the charities of father, son, and husband; and, when sick and dispirited, it is the greatest of his comforts to be attended upon by those who love and regard him. There may be some danger of sinking even a stout heart by the forcible separation of husband and wife, parents and children, in times of sickness and distress; nor would one surely wish them to be entirely indifferent to each other.

The poor man, poor as he is, loves to cherish some idea of *property*;—to say, *my house, my garden, my furniture*; and when his whole domestic establishment goes to wreck on a removal to a work-house, he is weak enough to grieve a little at the loss of things that by use were become precious to him. He does not like to consider himself only as a lodger or a guest, though in a much finer mansion than his own:—he does not wear with satisfaction clothes, though warm, that belong to the *community*, and not to *himself*. And are not these respectable prejudices?

The poor man is comforted under his poverty by thinking himself *free*. This freedom of his, God knows, is circumscribed by such a number of imperious necessities, that it is reduced to little in effect; but he pleases himself in imagining that he possesses it; and that he may go out or come in, work or play, at his own option. He likes to be the judge of his own wants, and to provide for them after his own manner. He even chooses to have the determination whether he shall boil or bake his Sunday's dinner. Then he cannot be easy under *confinement*, abhors the thought of being under *lock and key*, and thinks no man deserves a *prison* who has not committed a crime. To be a cipher in the state, and therefore a *slave*, according to the idea of some political theorists, does not hurt him at all; but he has a mortal dislike to arbitrary rule exercised over all his actions. And is it in England that one would wish to extinguish these feelings!

Lastly, the poor man places some of his comfort (often, it must be acknowledged, too much of it) in *social and convivial enjoyments*. The bare mention of these, in a poor man, strikes many with the idea of great criminality, and the appellation of drunken and idle are liberally bestowed with great indignation. To get drunk, and squander at an ale-house what ought to maintain his family, is undoubtedly very wrong in



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What are the poor man's COMFORTS? They lie in a small compass; and therefore ought to be the more sacred.

One great source of comfort to the poor man is his *wife and children*, if he be not overburdened by them. Despised and insignificant as he may be abroad, he is of some consequence at home. He finds there those who care for him, who obey him; to whom he may say,

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J . . . A . . .